

ISHA SESSIONS 2017 – A Memorable Experience in Retrospect

By Saman Amarasinghe
Chairman/ CEO
National Sports Museum
Ministry of Sports, Sri Lanka

(Chairman Amarasinghe received a travel grant from ISHA to offset some of the costs to attend its conference in October, 2017. The following is his account of the event held in Knoxville, Tennessee and hosted by the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame.)

The ISHA Annual International Conference came into my horizon through web surfing and I am compelled to state that the opportunity granted was exceptional and I had an amazing expedition through the United States of America.

The absorbing sessions added to the initial exuberance of entry into the US of A and I had the fortune to rub shoulders with friendly comrades representing the international community. A key regret is that the program existed only for three days, whereas an extended version would have served all concerned in a more beneficial manner.

The prologue to the event, the pre-conference trip of familiarization to Moonshine and mountains created the necessary camaraderie for the delegates to be assimilated with each other paving the way for an effervescent introduction. The unfolding scenario of past glory and heritage blending marginally with the current backdrop at Moonshine created a feeling of nostalgia.

The organizers of the event, ISHA, had done optimum justice to the validity of the conference with clockwork precision and supreme event management. The roof was definitely raised during the first session by the faculty in attendance where the desired effect was very much achieved without any limitations.

In Sri Lanka, the population of women is larger than the men's and it was fitting that the host of the event was a women's association, Women's Basketball Hall of Fame. This brought back memories of my own experience with Basketball in Sri Lanka and the refrain of WBHF of "mission to honor the past, celebrate the present and promote the future," rekindled memories of my past endeavors. My previous roles in the capacities of Honorary General Secretary of Sri Lanka Basketball Federation, Honorary General Secretary of Sri Lanka Schools Basketball Association and Senior Master in charge of the largest public school in Sri Lanka Royal College, Colombo placed me on closer footing with the sport of Basketball.

My country, Sri Lanka, is going through the process of digitalization and the second sessions focused on the same subject matter raising the bar in my outlook with regard to the Sri Lankan approach pertaining to the archiving and sports museums. I will utilize the valuable knowledge gained during the sessions to uplift my digital enterprise in serving my nation and institute I represent the Sri Lankan National Sports Museum, a pioneering effort in the annals of sports history in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka is on the verge of gaining Middle income status from an economic view point and it is of paramount importance that the national museum should be institutionalized at the lowest possible cost to the national exchequer. Session three provided me with new vistas on applying new techniques and creating solutions thus optimizing limited resources in hand the vast experience of the presenters and how they envisioned the process did create an aura of respectful salutation.

Session 4A provided an insight into how to be enterprising in an environment requiring to be more cost effective and energy efficient. Sri Lanka is blessed with sun shine almost every day of life and the methodologies that could be adopted to harness the valuable resource will be uppermost in my mind. I am grateful for the pathway shown through the session in creating a way to achieve better than desired results.

In Sri Lanka we are into an inaugural program of sports museums and as such marketing the concept would be a herculean task. It is my considered opinion that sports marketing practices of the modern era that was presented would be termed as “manna from heaven” to enliven the process from a national viewpoint. As such, session 4B provided positive thinking on how to identify customers and keep them engaged.

The ISHA event was a huge partnering process internationally. The 5A session underlined the value of such partnerships to develop the required standards of sporting history to ensure a “slam dunk.”

Even in a country like Sri Lanka with high literacy rate but limited digitalization, social media plays a significant role irrespective of any gender bias. What was learned in managing social media to leverage existing and new relationships will be put into valuable use as we progress in our enterprise in Sri Lanka. Session 5B created the backdrop on how to manage content with limited time and budgets.

Sport in Sri Lanka is part of the school curriculum and most national representatives are unearthed through schools. However sports psychology and consulting practices are not in vogue. I gained valuable insight into how to develop sports-based curriculum that explores leadership and diversity. Sri Lanka is a country of diversity: multi religious with four ethnicities entwined within an environment of harmony and peaceful co-existence. The session 6 clearly provided new inputs to manage sports curriculum.

The time-out tour was mind boggling. It highlighted the state of the art archival areas and a sense of regret channeled through my mind as to how and when my country could reach such levels of technological advancement. A period covered from 1792 to date was “exhilarating” to describe same in one single word.

Session 8 definitely belonged to the delegates and I fervently hope that we did justice to the sessions with our submissions. The matters which were brought up clearly reflected the diverse nature of the participants which provided further insights into sports archives and sports museums.

To continue a public enterprise independently, relevant links and donor contributions are an absolute necessity. My mind dwells on my own experience where the Sports Museum in Sri Lanka is housed within a building donated by a philanthropist located at a most conspicuous and valuable arena. The extensive presentation by the faculty of “Pat Summit Foundation” created the additional assistance that is needed to coin a reasonable program to entice donors and increase donor base to required levels to sustain the process.

I’ll be failing my duty if I do not mention the three great superstars in the international sporting arena who were the guest speakers at this International Conference: Guest speaker Kate Ziegler, an Olympian gold medalist in aquatic sports who delivered an exciting speech at the lunch session of the second day, a celebrity football player from University of Tennessee named Inky Johnson who delivered the keynote address at the evening of champions at the Women’s Basketball hall of fame, and an outstanding women’s basketball coach, Holly Warlick, who is an Olympian and Hall of Famer, inspired us at the farewell breakfast on the final day. They inspired all the participants with their personal experience and hardworking path of success exposing their glory in the arena of sports.

The vendor exhibition which was conducted along with the ISHA annual conference was a great way to showcase the modern technology to delegates from the sports heritage world. This gave an opportunity to the participants to network with the leaders in the sports heritage industry. We received an “exhibitor passport” which required us to interact with each exhibitor. This novel concept gave us the key to maximum interaction with the expertise in the field of sports heritage industry, more than the price offered by the organizers.

It was a sad process to bid adieu to the dear organizers and the delegates who did expand our horizons and provided new vistas for us to focus on in our selected endeavors. I take this opportunity to convey my best wishes and the wishes of my countrymen to all of them and also wish them in true Sri Lankan terms, “Ayubowan” which translated means a wish “may you live long.”

Saman Amarasinghe

Chairman/ CEO

National Sports Museum

Ministry of Sports, Sri Lanka